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ABSTRACT

Presenting a brief history of Mississippi's Cherokee Schools (1804-1976), this article emphasizes the gradual implementation of innovative programs since 1970 under guidance by the Policy Advisory Committees (PAC) which are composed of a majority of parents and a minority of professionals. Specifically, this article elaborates upon the educational objectives of four programs now operative in the Cherokee Schools. These programs are indentified as: (1) the follow-through (FT) Englemann-Becker Model (a K-3 program administered by PAC via a Bureau of Indian Affairs principal, a teacher supervisor, and a PAC-hired FT director utilizing the Direct Instructional System of Teaching and Remediation (DISTAR) materials and involving nongraded materials, departmentalization by class or group, parent involvement/participation in PAC and classrooms, etc.); (2) organization of a modified, nongraded, and departmentalized intermediate level to accomodate FT students; (3) Public Law 89-10 Title I Program (elementary and secondary remedial education in reading, math, language, learning disabilities, speech, hearing, and special education for the very slow learners); (4) Learning Disabilities Program (a Title VI diagnostic-prescriptive and training center). Statistics comparing the academic achievement of Cherokee Schools' students with national norms are also presented for 1970-1975. (JC)

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THEME: SCHOOLS BELONG TO THE PEOPLE

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BRIEF HISTORY OF CHEROKEE SCHOOLS 1804 – 1976
by
T.J. DuPree

As early as 1804 the Moravian Missionary Society of United Brethren, a religious group, started school for 8 Cherokee Indian children at Spring Place in northwestern Georgia. The Moravians were more interested in converting "heathen" Indians to their brand of Christian belief. However, the Cherokee insisted that classroom instruction in the three R's also be included.

Around 1816 the President of the United States was told about the Cherokee efforts for educating their children and directed the Indian agent in that area to build a larger school building and quarters for a teacher. The purpose of the school was to teach farming to boys and homemaking to girls in addition to some reading, writing and arithmetic.

By 1831 there were three missionary groups operating 11 schools in Cherokee country, but mostly in Georgia. These groups were Moravian, Baptist and Presbyterian. Their source of funds came from federal, tribal and missionary appropriations.

Cherokee formal education came to a standstill during the forced removal of the Cherokees to Oklahoma Territory in 1838. However, the interest of the Cherokee people to provide education for their children went with them to the new territory, and they started a public school system as soon as they were settled in their new homes in the settlement which was to be later called Tahlequah.

Col. Will Thomas tried to start Qualla Town Academy, a school for Cherokee children in North Carolina in the late 1850's, but this effort was cut short by the Civil War, and it was not until 1880 that the Society of Friends (Quakers) started negotiations to contract with the Federal government and the Cherokee Tribe to establish schools in what is now Qualla Boundary.

It was about this time that J.D. Garner, a Quaker from Maryville, Tennessee, was appointed by the federal government as Superintendent of Cherokee Schools east of the Mississippi.

Finally, on May 31, 1881, representatives of the Friends' church from Indiana signed a contract with the Cherokee tribal officials to establish an industrial type school in addition to lower grade schools. This was subject to approval by Washington, and would last 10 years. Financial support for the school would come from annual interest of the trust fund held by the government to the credit of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, and also in part by funds furnished by the

Friends' church. The location of these day schools were one at Yellow Hill (Cherokee Village), one at Snowbird Gap in Graham County, one at Big Cove, and one at Birdtown. It was not until 1884 that they started the boarding facilities for both boys and girls living too far to walk to school daily.

Quakers in charge of the schools expressed dissatisfied friction with Superintendent Henry W. Spray as early as 1887. He had been formerly head of the Maryville, Tennessee, Normal School. So, evidently he was also a Quaker because a committee of Quakers "kindly asked him and his wife, Anna Gray, to resign at the end of the fiscal year 1891." But, Gray refused to leave. He finally had to leave, but was appointed Superintendent by the Federal Government Indian Office in 1899 and stayed on until 1903. This time his resignation was forced by Chief Jarret Smith.

The Cherokee Schools continued primarily as elementary and vocational oriented schools from 1st through 9th grades. Federal construction and expansion took place between 1906 and 1910. These are the old frame buildings still standing on Yellow Hill.

Between 1910 and 1934 the school emphasis, in addition to vocational and trades training, was expanding boarding schools and suppression of native language use in school. However, soon after the new commissioner of Indian Affairs, Collier, was appointed there were some dramatic changes made in Indian education. The semi-military air was removed from schools. Use of native language; emphasis was placed on community day schools instead of boarding schools, but more importantly the curriculum in schools began to change.

It was not until after the Second World War that the tourist trade began to expand at Cherokee and with it a demand was made for native crafts such as basketry, woodcarving, pottery, etc. Even though the production vocational training eventually was abandoned, the crafts development continued to grow and is still going strong at present. Most of this is in basket weaving and woodcarving.

The boarding part of the Cherokee Central School was closed in June of 1954. Mr. T.J. DuPree was the last person in charge of the dormitories as Teacher-Adviser. The boarding school population had diminished to 55 or 60 students who were mostly from Seminole and Choctaw tribes. Roads were improved and bus routes were expanded.

At present all of the Cherokee Indian children who do not attend public schools in Jackson, Swain and Graham counties, attend Cherokee elementary and Junior-Senior High Schools. These are still operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In 1962 the outlying day schools were consolidated into one sturdy and fairly modern red brick elementary school at Cherokee (Old Yellow Hill). The curriculum and classroom structure remained traditional until 1970. Cherokee elementary school now is no longer the simple, graded, self-contained country school it was 6 or more years ago. It is a highly complex educational operation providing specialized educational services to between 760 and 800 students.

In January of 1970 the Cherokee tribal Advisory School Board and the Agency administration decided that some changed had to be made in their school system. The school board recommended the selection of a new principal to fill the elementary school vacancy. There were also pushing to have a new Junior-Senior High School built.

One of the first major changes was made by the Policy Advisory Committee or P.A.C. which has a voting membership of a majority of parents and minority of professional persons. The majority includes three Tribal Council members who are also on the Advisory School Board. The change was from the Arkansas Follow-Through Model to the Englemann-Becker Model in Kindergarten through second, and later third grades.

In the meantime the school administration, together with the Advisory School Board, developed broad educational goals for Cherokee Schools. They are as follows:

1. To provide quality educational opportunities for each student so that highest individual potential in academic achievement will be reached at the end of high school.

2. To reduce social promotions to a bare minimum, and use them only when necessary and with the consent of the parents involved.

3. To upgrade the quality of the instructional staff through educational leave, pre-service and in-service workshops plus adult education opportunities and conferences.

4. To do everything possible to help Cherokee children reach educational achievement levels competitive with comparable children in non-Indian communities.

In order to achieve the above broad goals within a few short years, changes had to be started with parents, teachers and student attitudes. Also, restructuring the outmoded traditional curriculum, and securing adequate funding. Several of these things are now taking place to some degree and must continue to be emphasized and supported by the parents, the school staff, school administrators, tribal officials and especially the School Boards.

To achieve the above 4 major broad goals the following must take place:

1. There must be full enrollment of school age children, and a sustained effort must be made to cut down wasteful absenteeism.

2. The instructional staff must be able to hold the full attention of pupils for reasonable lengths of intensive instructional time with frequent short breaks in between.

3. The instructional staff must master the best methods and materials available to meet the educational needs of the students.

4. The school administration must provide adequate funding, leadership, teacher accountability methods, and student accountability methods.

5. The desire for learning and school achievement must be awakened in each student. If traditional methods of lecturing and "nagging" do not work, modern methods of behavior modification must be tried. Low aspiration and low motivation are considered to be the highest causes of failure in school. Therefore, a working knowledge of rewards and punishment principles must be made known not only to instructional staffs but also to parents.

6. The number of pupils per teacher, or instructor, must be reduced as low as budgets will allow. The smaller the teacher-pupil ratio, the greater is the concentration of effort.

7. Parental involvement and community support are essential for achieving high quality educational goals. Any community, whether it be town, city, reservation, school district or whatever, receives only as much quality education as it encourages and demands of its children, its educational institutions, and it is willing to pay for in time, effort, energy and funds. The know-how is available but the effort is sometimes weak in some places.

The changes were made gradually during a 6-year period until at present there are 4 basic educational programs going on simultaneously in the elementary school and several in the Junior-Senior High School.

The first, one, as mentioned earlier, is the Follow-Through Engelmann-Becker Model used in Kindergarten through the third grades. This is the largest of the elementary programs with 418

students in 17 classrooms. This is administered by P.A.C.* through the BIA principal, a teacher-supervisor and a P.A.C. hired F-T Director. BIA provides all of the classroom teachers except one substitute teacher hired by P.A.C., which also provides most of the classroom aides except 5 permanent ones hired by BIA and 4 temporaries hired by Title I contract. Teachers and aides receive intensive training in methods and use of E-B DISTAR materials (DISTAR is an acronym for Direct Istructional System of Teaching and Remediation.) The materials are sequentially progressive in difficulty with about 160 lessons per school year in each of Levels I, II, & III. We call the Kindergarten ye[illegible] the first year or PHASE I, PHASE II is the second year in sch[illegible]ol or the first grade, etc. The sub levels are designated A, B, C, D, and up to U. The groups within a particular classroom are designated as Eagles, Deers, Buffaloes and Bears, and are changed periodically. The E-B Model is a well structured and well disciplined approach to early elementary school education. This is what the Cherokee people want, and would like to have the E-B Model through the 6th grade. However, DISTAR materials have only been developed through the 3rd grade and H.E.W. cannot or will not help financially for Follow-Through programs beyond the 3rd grade, at least at present. The F-T, P.A.C. contract with the E-B Model, which is based at the University of Oregon, calls for an on-site full-time consultant who provides pre- and in-service training, continuous checks on student achievement programs, criterion reference testing statistics, suggestions for improvement and reports to the school administrators. The results have been gratifying as achievement tables will show later in this article. This is so because most, if not all, of the ingredients for quality education are there:

1. It is non-graded throughout, by materials, from level to level on a continuous sequential progression from lesson to lesson, and movement forward is made when 85% criterion is reached.

2. It is departmentalized for structure, either within a large group or within a class group, with small groups going to a teacher or a paraprofessional for specific instruction in a certain area of reading, arithmetic or language.

3. Modern methods of instruction, designed to hold maximum pupil attention, are used.

4. There is parent involvement and active participation in P.A.C. and in classrooms.

5. Adequate supervision by administrators and consultants is there to help teachers and aides do a better job.

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* Policy Advisory Committee

6. Continuous criterion reference testing is there to find where the instructional program needs strengthening, and where the child needs help.

7. Modern methods of encouraging children to attend school regularly are there.

8. Small group instruction, for maximum concentration of effort, is there.

9. Cooperative efforts for quality education are there between the Tribal Council, the Advisory School Board, P.A.C., School Administration, Agency education, instructional staffs, and Follow-Through.

The second major program was probably the most difficult to implement. It was in organizing the modified, non-graded and departmentalized intermediate levels. The children are of 4th, 5th and 6th grade age. PHASE V includes Levels RM, M, N, O. PHASE VI includes Levels RP, P, Q, and R. PHASE VII includes RS, S, T, and U. There is no denying that we had our "growing pains" in adjusting to this new program from the old graded, self-contained structure. Two years were spent in preparing teachers, developing curriculums, talking to parent groups, purchasing materials, etc., before going into the new program. It started with one-half day the first year in September, 1973, and for the full school day the second year.

We already knew what the weaknesses of the old system were, and that the Cherokee people were dissatisfied with the poor academic progress made by a majority of the children during the past 50 to 75 year history of the schools. We finally received sufficient funds to put a trained aide in each of the classrooms in the intermediate levels starting in September of 1975.

This part of the program received the most opposition from some teachers. This is understandable because of loss of most classroom automony by the teacher, more rigid structure, teacher accountability, and insistence on better supervision and discipline in classrooms. Also, the instructional staff had to supervise the washrooms, dining room and halls.

In addition to basic subjects of reading, arithmetic and language, the students have social studies (with one or more units about American Indians), science, health, crafts, library, art, music, and physical education. The academic gains in the intermediate levels are not as dramatic as in Follow-Through. However, looking at it from the point of view of that the self-contained graded system had many, many years to prove itself and school dropout rates, social promotions, and failures kept going up, it was time to try something else.

Perhaps the non-graded system is not the only answer, nor even the best answer toward achieving quality education. But, it is working in the Follow-Through E-B Model, and there is no earthly reason why it should not work in intermediate levels and even the Junior-Senior High School. There is a gradual improvement in student achievement each year.

The third major program is the Public Law 89-10 Title I which has been providing remedial educational services in reading, arithmetic, language, learning disabilities, speech, hearing, and a small self-contained SPED classroom for very slow students. It concentrates efforts to helping children who for one or more reasons have fallen behind. And, there are many reasons for other than being a naturally slow learning student. Some of these are poor school attendance, short attention spans, poor study habits, lack of self-discipline, low motivation, low aspiration toward education in the home, emotional disturbance, lack of self-confidence and poor nutrition in early formative years. These are in addition to poor instructional methods, and social promotions. Lately, we find that otherwise normal children sometimes have "hang-ups" when dealing with specific abstract symbols such as the printed letter, word or number. Others have difficulty assimilating sounds into meaningful communication.

Children participating in Title I are selected from the lowest achievers in reading, arithmetic and language in the intermediate levels up through high school. The object is to find their weak academic areas and to attempt to remediate them and gradually work them out of the Title I program and into the regular program full-time. Title I is contracted to Smoky Mountain Mental Health in Western North Carolina and they are doing a good job.

The fourth and newest of the programs is in Learning Disabilities financed through title VI funds. A two-year pilot program of this type was contracted to Tennessee Wesleyan University starting in September of 1973. Other BIA areas sent personnel to observe the project during its second year of operation at Cherokee. About 415 students were referred and screened for learning disabilities. Of these, there were 120 that were found to have one or more learning disability to some degree. 31 of the more severe cases were selected from the 120 for therapy. The project was originally funded to take care of only 30. Title I added another 30 the following year.

The two year pilot project ended in June of 1975, and a one year Title VI, L.D. project was contracted to Western Carolina University for 1975-76. This Title VI project provides a diagnostic-prescriptive and training center. It has also added tutoring services for multi-handicapped home-bound children. In some cases where an otherwise normally intelligent child was found to have a learning disability, and was found early enough, the child gained a whole year in reading

ability after receiving 30 days of reading therapy. All of elementary, Title I and VI are housed in a new, large comfortable building put up during the summer of 1975.

After years of hard work and planning by the Cherokee Agency, the Advisory School Board and the Central Education office, the new Junior-Senior Cherokee High School was finally completed and occupied in the fall of 1975. It is indeed a far cry from the first log cabin one room Moravian school house in 1804. The 600 student new structure is one of the most modern in functional design and architectural beauty in the Bureau of Indian Affairs and certainly in Western North Carolina.

In closing I would like to say that Cherokee Schools are not the same dull institutions they were 6 to 10 or more years ago. BIA and people anywhere have never seen anything such as the rebirth in education taking place here. Educators and students from within and outside of North Carolina visiting our schools are amazed at our advanced programs and overall student programs.

We must never allow Cherokee Schools to become second and third rate again. The only way this can be accomplished is by continued community interest, parent involvement, BIA and tribal positive leadership, selection and training of well qualified instructional staffs, and of course, adequate funding.

The following chart shows the achievement growth of Cherokee elementary school children in recent years. Emphasis on quality education for Indian children needs to be continued because children of all races, colors and creeds are America's most precious resource for the future. None must be wasted.

Cherokee Elementary School Year to Year Comparison of Grade Achievement Level Using Wide Range for Primary Levels and Metropolitan for Intermediate Levels 1970-1975

Level or Grade	May 1970 % of Pupils above N.N.	March 1971 % of Pupils above N.N.	May 1972 % of Pupils above N.N.	May 1973 % of Pupils above N.N.	May 1974 % of Pupils above N.N.	May 1975 % of Pupils above N.N.	Average % of Pupils above N.N.
KG.	** No Records Available	* 84.8%	* 89.4%	* 97.8%	* 88.0%	* 92.0%	* 90.8%
1st	** No Records Available	* 53.3%	* 74.2%	* 86.3%	* 90.1%	* 79.9%	* 76.8%
2nd	29.9%	* 42.2%	* 41.5%	* 70.1%	* 77.0%	* 83.9%	* 57.5%
3rd	15.3%	14.9%	* 14.3%	* 47.0%	* 61.2%	* 61.0%	* 35.7%
4th	20.8%	40.0%	30.1%	25.9%	25.3%	43.0%	30.9%
5th	14.1%	27.6%	32.2%	24.0%	10.0%	42.1%	30.9%
6th	36.1%	31.9%	42.9%	36.0%	42.6%	58.5%	41.4%
							* 51.2%

** = No records available from original F-T Arkansas Model.

* = Englemann-Becker Model using DISTAR materials & methods.

N.M.= National Norms.

* Overall %